



Post-Operative Guide: Gingival Grafting

Section 1: The first 24 hours

What to expect

Pain: The amount of pain you feel after the gingival graft has a lot to do with the size and type of the graft used. Free Gingival Graft and Connective Tissue Grafts tend to hurt more than Cadaver grafts because of the additional wound where the graft was harvested from. If the pain increases significantly a few days (3 to 7 days) after the graft, please call for instructions.

Bleeding: You will bleed in the first 24 hours after surgery. This is totally normal. Keep in mind that when blood mixes with saliva it may appear as if you are bleeding more than you are. Don't sweat it if you're still bleeding a little bit when you go to bed, just put a towel over your pillow and get some shut eye.

Swelling: You are probably going to experience some degree of swelling after surgery. The amount of swelling you have will depend on the size of the gingival graft. The swelling is usually greatest in the first 4 days and should start to decrease by 7 to 10 days. If the swelling increases significantly a few days (3 to 7 days) after the surgery please call for instructions.

Sutures: If sutures were placed directly after surgery, you might feel them with your tongue. Do your best to leave the little guys alone. Messing with them is ultimately going to screw with the healing of the graft.

Strict No-Can-Do's

- (1) Do not pull on your lip to look at the surgical site for the first 2 weeks.
- (2) Do not rinse with anything for the first day after surgery.
- (3) Do not spit, suck through a straw, or touch the surgical site for the first 2 weeks.
- (4) Do not rub or apply excess pressure to your face to massage the area if bone grafting was done. The bone needs to heal without ANY outside pressure for 3 months.
- (5) Do not smoke or drink alcohol for the first 3 days after surgery.
- (6) Do not exercise, mow the lawn, vacuum the house, shovel snow, or play sports for the first 5 days after surgery. These activities tend to increase the risk of bleeding. For the first 24 hours, you should be a couch potato!
- (7) Do not eat or drink hot foods/beverages (warm is ok) for the first 7 days after surgery.
- (8) Do not consume spicy foods, chips, popcorn, carbonated drinks, or acidic juices (Orange, Grapefruit, etc.) for the 14 days after surgery.



Things you should do

Cold Packs: As you leave the office and when you arrive home, use a cold pack on your face next to the extraction site to keep down the swelling. Keep the cold pack on for 20 minutes, then off for 20 minutes. You can repeat this cycle for the first 36 hours.

Medications: Take all the medication given or prescribed as directed. You may have started some of them just before the surgery. Take all the medications with food unless otherwise stated.

Oral Hygiene: Do not rinse your mouth for the first 24 hours. Do not brush or floss the grafted area for the first two weeks after surgery. However, please continue your normally oral hygiene routine throughout the rest of your mouth. Do NOT use the Water-pik or water-flossing devices, they are traumatic to the healing process. Rinsing with the prescription mouthwash, Listerine or warm salt water will help to clean the treated area. To make the salt water rinse; mix one teaspoon of salt with half a glass of warm (NOT hot) water. CAUTION: do NOT rinse vigorously. Instead, place the mouthwash in your mouth and gently rock your head from side to side, bathing the surgical site in the mouth rinse.

Palatal Stent: Sometimes a plastic retainer is made to protect the roof of your mouth for the first 7 days after surgery. If we gave you a stent please wear it as often as possible for the first 7 days. You can eat food and drink fluids with it in place. Just be sure to rinse it afterwards.

Diet: Most patients find it difficult to sit down and eat a normal meal after dental surgery. It's not difficult to see why - chewing, chomping, smacking and sucking can aggravate the treated area resulting in pain. It could also re-open the surgical site which could result in an infection and serious healing complications. We suggest you eat soft foods, take smaller bites and chew only in the areas where there is no dressing or sutures. Avoid highly seasoned foods and COMPLETELY AVOID chewing where the graft was performed. It's important to maintain a nutritious diet while you heal. The patient who maintains a healthy diet of soft foods generally feels better, has less discomfort and heals faster.

Diet Suggestions for the first 24 hours:

**(All food must be consumed at a cool or cold temperature. Nothing warm in the 1st 24hrs!)*

Beverages:

- Fruit smoothies, Protein shakes, Iced tea, Milk, Milk shakes (no straws!), Nutritional Supplement drink (e.g. boost, muscle milk, ensure), Water

Main Courses:

- Cold pasta, Cold Soup, Cold Mashed Potatoes

Desserts:

- Applesauce, Cold pudding, Jell-O, Mousse, Yogurt



Section 2: Days 2-14

What to expect

Pain: Quite often the second day can be worse than the first. Hang in there, you're going to get through this. Pain usually is the worst for the first 3 days and should be gone by 10 to 14 days. If the pain and/or swelling increase significantly a few days (3 to 7 days) after the extraction, please call for instructions.

Bleeding: You may still have a little bit of bleed from the surgical site. This should mainly be in the form of oozing and the appearance should be pink from mixture with your saliva. Sometimes spontaneous bleeding can occur up to 7 days later. This is likely the result of trauma to the roof of the mouth (where the graft was taken from). Apply firm pressure with damp gauze for 10 minutes to the roof of the mouth. If this still doesn't resolve the bleeding, call the office.

Swelling: You may experience additional swelling from what you saw in the first 24 hours. The swelling may continue to get worse the second day. This should level off on day 3 and slowly begin to decrease by day 4 or 5. The swelling is usually greatest in the first 5 days and should start to decrease by 7 to 10 days. If the swelling increases significantly a few days (3 to 7 days) after surgery, please call for instructions.

Bruising: The development of a black, blue-green or yellow discoloration is the result of blood spreading under the tissues. It's quite normal for a bruise to form in the first 2-3 days after surgery. The size and length of time you have the bruise will be directly related to the size and complexity of the procedure. Most bruises go away in 7 days; however, some may persist for up to 14 days after surgery.

Things you should do

Warm Packs: After the first 24 to 36 hours the cold packs can be switched to warm packs, although this is not required. Gentle pressure is all you need. Make sure it's not hot!

Oral Hygiene: Please continue to avoid brushing the grafted area until your two week post-operative appointment at our office.

Palatal Stent: The stent can be used up to 14 days after surgery but is not required after 7 days.

Diet: Your diet after the first 24 hours will be a little different from the first 24 hours. The rule of thumb is as follows: If you can pinch through it easily, you're allowed to eat it! We suggest you continue eat these soft foods, take smaller bites and COMPLETELY AVOID chewing where the graft was placed.

Diet Suggestions for Days 2-14:

**(In addition to the list for the first 24hrs, you can also enjoy the following suggestions. Any of your options for day 2-14 can be consumed either warm or cold – NEVER HOT!)*



Beverages:

- Apple Cider, Coffee, Tea – Green, Black, or Herbal

Breakfast:

- Scrambled eggs, Omelets, Oatmeal, French Toast, Pancakes, Waffles, Soft Cereals

Lunch and Dinner:

- Soups, Pasta, Fish fillets (steamed or baked), Frittata, Stews, Crock-pot meals, Slow cooked meats, Slow cooked veggies, Mac and Cheese, Meatloaf

Section 3: Day 15 and on

What to expect

Pain and Swelling: You should no longer be experiencing major pain into the third week of healing. If you feel an increase in pain or swelling please give the office a call to discuss your symptoms.

Sutures: If resorbable sutures were used they will probably be dissolved by now. If non-resorbable sutures were used they will likely be removed at your two-week post-operative appointment (Sometimes we leave them in longer). If you feel a suture might still be present after the sutures were supposed to be removed, please call the office to have it evaluated.

Things to avoid

Continue to avoid using the water-pik close to the surgical site for the first month after surgery. Continue to avoid rubbing or applying excess pressure to your face to massage the area if bone grafting was done. The bone needs to heal without ANY outside pressure for 3 months.

Things you should do

Oral Hygiene: By the second week you should be feeling close to your old self (hopefully better!). Discontinue using the prescription oral rinse. After your 2-week post-operative appointment you will use a roll brush technique for the next 6 weeks with ONLY A SOFT TOOTHBRUSH.

Instructions for the Roll Brush Technique (First 6 weeks): First the toothbrush is placed with the bristle ends on the gingiva at a 45 degree angle to the long axis of the teeth with the sides of the bristles resting against the teeth. Next, gently rotate your wrist, moving the toothbrush from your gums to your teeth. Do this 10 to 15 times. Inspect your teeth closely to make sure you have removed all visible plaque.



Diet

Make sure to take smaller bites and chew only on the opposite side of where your surgery performed. The most important recommendation we can make is to avoid chewing where surgery was performed for at least two months. If surgery was performed on both sides, make sure to strictly follow the soft food diet recommendations listed for Days 2-14 after surgery. Continue to eat a soft food diet for the next two months.

Section 4: What's Next?

Final Evaluation:

We may ask you to return to our office after 3 to 4 months of healing. The purpose of this appointment is to make sure the graft turned out the way it was supposed to. Sometimes we need to perform gingival graft procedures in two stages. If we planned a two-stage graft procedure with you we will set up your second surgery at this appointment.

In the case of an emergency you can reach either Dr. John Thousand or Dr. Bob Thousand on their cell phones:

Dr. John Thousand Cell: 303-250-4091

Dr. Bob Thousand Cell: 904-669-9661